



Just who is the premium **BOND?**



1. THE EARLY YEARS

Allan Bryce takes a look at the life and times of James Bond, the only ornithologist in the world with a licence to kill . . .

When Ian Lancaster Fleming sat down in 1952 to write the first of what would become the most popular series of spy thrillers the world had ever known, he was stuck for a name to give his fast-living, womanising ultra-sophisticated hero. Looking around he spotted a book on his coffee table called *British Birds of the West Indies*, which was written by the renowned ornithologist James Bond. He adopted the name and made it part of popular mythology: James Bond, 007 — licenced to kill, hero of 15 feature films that have grossed close to a staggering one thousand million dollars at the box office.

Of course Fleming didn't know what sort of a legend he was creating at the time. A busy career as a globe-hopping journalist had prevented him from pursuing his ambition to write a novel before now, but he was about to get married and settle down in the Jamaican beach house he had recently purchased, and he hoped that his first book, *Casino Royale*, would provide him with a modest extra income for a while. As it turned out he was to become a very wealthy man indeed. The novels became instant bestsellers and immediately attracted the attention of film and television producers such as the famed Alexander Korda, who wanted to do a big budget screen version of *Live*

didn't come off, and instead Barry Nelson played the character of Bond in a lacklustre CBS telemovie of *Casino Royale* in the mid 50s. This was the first Bond book to be sold to the movies and its author didn't do very well out of the deal: he let the rights go for just \$7,000, and got no extra when CBS then sold those rights to producer Charles K. Feldman for a profit (Feldman's *Casino Royale* was a witless spy spoof eventually made in 1967, with a host of Bonds being played by such talents as Woody Allen, David Niven and Peter Sellers!).

In the late 1950s Ian Fleming entered into an agreement with CBS to write a series of brand new Bond episodes for television. He worked on it for a while, but eventually the deal went flat and so he turned the plot outlines he had created into the basis for his first collection of short stories, entitled *For Your Eyes Only*. Understandably, this sort of recycling of material seemed only sensible to the author. But in 1958 it was a way of thinking that landed him in court. He struck a bargain with an Irish film director named Kevin McClory to create an entirely new film adventure set in the Bahamas and dealing with the hijack of an atomic bomb by the Russians. Fleming worked on the screenplay with writer Jack Whittingham, and when it was finished went off to incorporate many ideas from it into *Thunderball*, his eighth Bond novel.

No sooner did McClory read an advance copy of it than he and Whittingham petitioned London's High Court for an injunction to hold up publication. It was three years before the case was resolved to Fleming's disadvantage. The novel was to carry a credit to Whittingham and film rights were to belong to McClory. In future Fleming worked alone on the Bond

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In the early 60s the character of James Bond appeared on screen for the first time as his creator envisaged him. The film was *Dr No* and the actor playing him was, of course, Sean Connery. Connery was seen by producers Harry Saltzman and 'Cubby' Broccoli in a minor British comedy called *On The Fiddle* and marked down for the Bond shortlist. But at the beginning the favourite for the role was Patrick McGoochan, a good looking stage actor who later went on to become television's *Danger Man*. McGoochan turned the part down on moral grounds — feeling that the character was too vicious to be thought of as a hero. Another front runner was Richard Johnson (who went on to play Bulldog Drummond in movies like *Deadlier Than The Male* — 1966). He turned down the part because of his unwillingness to submit to a multi-picture contract.

Interestingly enough Roger Moore was also considered for the role, but rejected because of both his TV *Saint* commitments and his too dapper image. Connery, the Scottish son of a long-distance lorry driver from the Fountainridge area of Edinburgh, finally got the job.

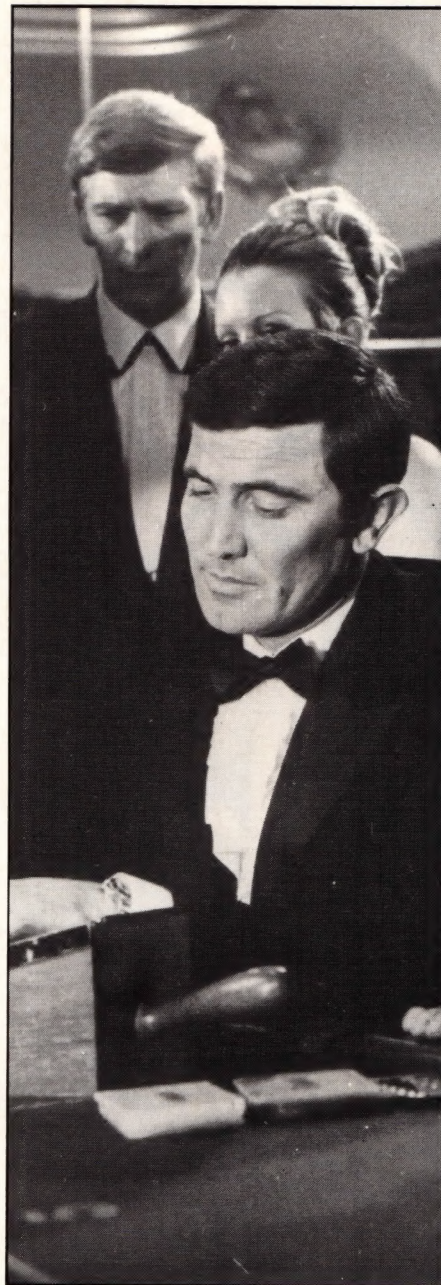
Dr No (1962) introduced its star in an impressive fashion. The director Terence Young did a take-off of a similar scene in the 1939 film *Juarez* where Paul Muni plays a whole scene with his back to the camera, finally turning round when someone asks him his name. 'Juarez', he sneers. In this instance Connery has his back to the camera in a crowded casino, until asked his name by actress Eunice Gayson. He casually lights a cigarette and takes a draw on it before announcing: 'Bond . . . James Bond.'

Dr No was originally conceived as a thick-ear detective story with science-fiction overtones. Its plot has Bond going down to Jamaica to investigate the sinister activities of the diabolical title character (Joseph Wiseman) who destroys American missiles from his island retreat of Crab Key. The bad doctor works for SPECTRE (Special Executor for Counter-Intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge and Extortion) — an evil bunch created by Fleming to save blaming all the bad deeds of the world on the Russians!

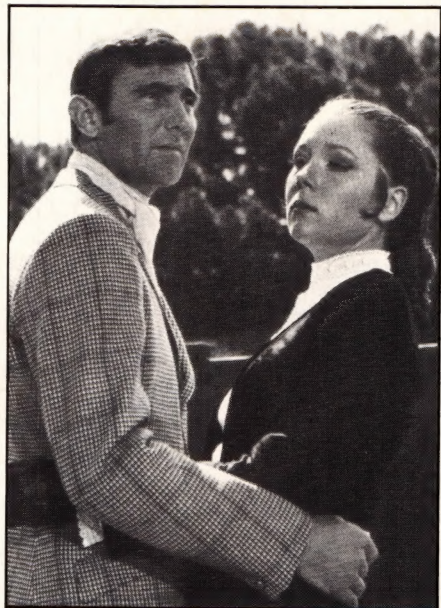
Dr No had all the ingredients that were to make the Bond films a licence to print money in the future. It had a coolly amoral hero who lived up to his licenced to kill job description — the scene where he calmly shoots villain Anthony Dawson stunned audiences of the time who were used to fair play from the good guy. It also had lovely locations, lots of tongue-in-cheek humour (put in by screenwriter Richard Maibum to defuse much of the implied sex and violence) and of course it had girls. In this instance it was Swiss-born Ursula Andress who rose from the sea as the bikini-clad Honey Ryder to become the pin-up of the year and start a trend for a whole range of fantasy females who increased in quantity if not quality as the series progressed.

The film was a massive success, and before long Bond was back in *From Russia With Love* (1963). This was also directed by Terence Young and is regarded by many (myself included) to be the very best of the series. In fact it would be fair to say that this was the last of the serious Bond movies before the girls, guns, and gadgets began to get out of hand. Richard Maibum once again scripted the tale of Bond's quest for a top-secret decoding machine called 'The Lektor' — a search that takes him to Istanbul and into the welcoming arms of beautiful Russian agent Tatiana Romanova (Daniela Bianchi). Unknown to Bond he is walking into a SPECTRE trap. They want 007 dead and have trained a deadly Russian assassin (Robert Shaw) to do the job.

From Russia With Love was an excellent thriller by any standards, containing some of the most exciting action scenes of the entire series, among the highlights of which were Bond's disposing of half the Russian fleet with a well-aimed flare pistol, and his tussle with Red Grant (Robert Shaw) in the cramped corridors of the Istanbul Express; seldom has such an effective bit of action been staged in such a claustrophobic setting. The film also instigated the practice of using tense pre-credits sequences to draw viewers in immediately. In this one we see 007 stalked by Grant through a moonlit garden. He is finally captured and killed, but



This page: George Lazenby, briefly Bond. Opposite: Our man Sean, forever Bond.





then revealed to be a double of Connery giving the assassin some practice before the main event.

Next came *Goldfinger* and the Bond series really got into gear. Audiences were now becoming familiar with the regular performers like Connery himself and his thick-skinned boss 'M' (Bernard Lee), as well as the efficient and doting Miss Moneybags (Lois Maxwell) who Bond always chatted up on his way to another assignment. Also regular contributors were many of the technicians behind the scenes. John Barry had ghost written the memorable Bond theme for the first film and later scored most of the Bond pictures creating memorable theme songs also, to be sung by the likes of Shirley Bassey, Tom Jones, Matt Monro, Nancy Sinatra and even Lois Armstrong. And another important influence was production designer Ken Adam, who had masterminded *Dr No's* nuclear reactor room on an incredibly low budget and was later to have the money to spend to design the largest set of all time for *The Spy Who Loved Me*: a submarine docking bay that measured 374 feet in length, 160 feet in width, and was 53 feet high. Built on one soundstage at Pinewood this became officially known as the 007 stage and was later used to shoot sequences in such mega-hit movies as *Superman* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Goldfinger was the movie that took the Bond films in a new direction. It had girls galore, most notable among them being ex-Avengers girl Honor Blackman's Pussy (should I re-phrase that?), and it had gadgets like 007's souped-up Aston Martin equipped with such devices as an ejector seat to get rid of unwanted passengers; front-wing machine guns, bullet-proof windows and built in radar and smoke-screen — no secret agent should be without one! The plot was even more fanciful too: the nefarious Auric Goldfinger (Gert Frobe) plans to knock over Fort Knox, aided by Pussy Galore (Blackman) and her private air-force. The climax has Bond chained to a nuclear device and trying to avoid the lethal steel-rimmed bowler hat of Goldfinger's murderous Korean manservant Oddjob (Harold Sakata). In between, the action was non-stop and our in-flappable hero always ready with a sardonic quip. At one point a potential assassin is disposed of by being forced to share a bathtub with an electric fire. 'Shocking, positively shocking,' comments Bond at this grisly demise.

The fourth Bond extravaganza was *Thunderball* (1964), which was made by arrangement with Kevin McGrory. Ian Fleming died of a heart attack before filming was completed, but he had sold all the rights to his novels to Broccoli and Saltzman and they had plenty of material to continue the series for many years to come. In this instance many critics felt the film, which was directed once more by Terence Young, to be overlong and somewhat lacking in incident, but *Thun-*

derball proved the biggest commercial success to date, breaking every box office record in New York, Los Angeles and London. Bond fever was spreading and imitations were springing up everywhere — even on television, where *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* became hugely popular. The latter was actually based on some ideas given to producer Norman Felton by Fleming himself shortly before his death.

Fifth in the series came *You Only Live Twice* with its lovely Nancy Sinatra theme song and a plot involving Bond's arch-enemy Blofeld (Donald Pleasance) causing a great deal of trouble by kidnapping Russian and American spacecraft and bringing them back to his secret base deep inside a Japanese volcano. The object of all this seems to be to start a war between the super-powers, after which SPECTRE will emerge triumphant. The screenplay for the movie was done by noted macabre novelist Roald Dahl, who provided many amusing plot twists and some excellent dialogue. He also devised a gadget which was as spectacular to watch as Bond's Aston Martin, in the shape of a helicopter that comes packed in a couple of suitcases and can be quickly assembled into 'Little Nellie' — a lethal flying machine with which Bond takes on a fleet of enemy copters and wins out.

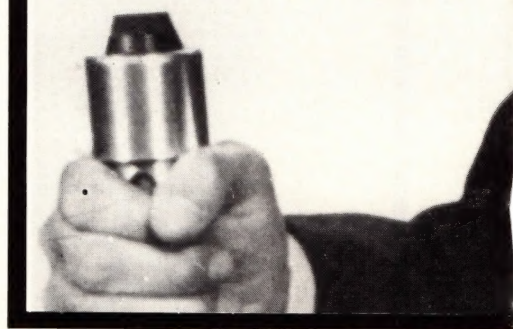
The copter was spotted in an aviation magazine by Harry Saltzman, who contacted its owner, Wing Commander Ken Wallis, to fly it for the film.

You Only Live Twice remains one of the best of the later Bonds and is packed full of spectacular action. But Connery commented during the making of it that he felt the character was being ignored as the makers went on adding bigger and better visual thrills. He had signed on to do one Bond film a year from 1962 to 1967 and now his contract had expired he didn't plan to do another. The producers tried to persuade him to change his mind with offers of large cash sums but it didn't work. Connery was now a major star and strong enough an actor to stand apart from the Bond image. The search thus began to find a new 007. Front runners for the part were narrowed down to a field of five: there was John Richardson, a handsome actor who had recently appeared opposite Racquel Welch in *One Million Years BC*, and three young English players: Anthony Rogers, Hans de Vries and Robert Campbell. The fifth was the one who got the job. He was an Australian who had come to England in the early 60s to become a successful model in television advertisements for such products as British Petroleum and Big Fry chocolate bars. Impressed by his looks and physique, Saltzman and Broccoli signed him up. His name was George Lazenby.

The film in which he starred as 007 was *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, a typically spectacular adventure with every ingredient but one absolutely on the button. The flaw in it all was Lazenby's inex-

perienced performance — which was helped only slightly by the producers' wise decision to cast the excellent Diana Rigg as his female lead. She received top billing because of her fan following as the best of the *Avengers* girls, and stole the show from the fledgling Bond. Though it was still a commercial success the film was nowhere near the hit the Connery Bonds had been, and both critics and public alike agreed on the fact that a better leading man was needed if the series was to continue.

Since it was obvious that Connery was the man the public wanted in the role, the head of United Artists stepped in with an unprecedented offer to get him back in





Bondage: one and a quarter million dollars up-front and a percentage of the profits of the next Bond film! Connery accepted.

Diamonds Are Forever thus brought Connery's 007 back to the screen for the penultimate time, and it was a smash hit. It was the first Bond movie to use extensive American locations — Los Angeles, Reno, Palm Springs etc. — and told of super villain Charles Gray's evil plan to rule the world with the aid of a laser-firing satellite and sinister experiments in cloning doubles of himself. The action and stunts were spectacular throughout, with 007 evading the deadliest of traps in his

cheeky was a Las Vegas car chase where our hero escaped down a narrow alley by turning his car on its side and skating through. Needless to say the followers weren't so lucky in attempting to emulate this move. The main romantic interest was provided by the lovely Jill St John as diamond thief Tiffany Case, and morbid humour was plentiful also: 'I know the diamonds are in the body, but where?' asks 007's long time pal, CIA agent Felix Leiter — to which Bond replies 'Alimentary Dr Leiter!'

After this it was time for a new James Bond. Connery had made a deal for one picture only, and Broccoli and Saltzman

actor suitable for the role. They chose Roger Moore, who was closer to Ian Fleming's original conception of Bond as a sophisticated and well tailored individual than the tough, belligerent Connery. But Moore's speciality was in playing light leading men with a comedy touch, as he had done to great effect with his role as television's *The Saint*. Would audiences accept him as the licenced to kill superspy 007?

**JAMES BOND RETURNS IN
APRIL'S VIDEO WORLD!**